

JKß-JOY KROEGER BECKNER-JKß

*classical realism, from hounds to humans & more!*

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News & Journeys of Joy! Vol. 21, No. 1, Happy New Year! 2026

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*Happiness!*

*Thank you to those who recently bought from my  
Retirement SALE! It will continue this spring!*

*I hope you enjoyed...*

*Merry Christmas & Happy Holidays!*

Yay! We found a rental in San Miguel de Allende, Guanajuato, Mexico! We are here from mid-December through mid-March this season. We have been spending two months each winter there nearly every year since 2001. This is our first year to be here for my birthday, Christmas and Valentine's Day!

Step back to November...

Nov.18, 2025: My long time dentist finds a small lump on my tongue near my throat. He recommends I see Dr. James M. Hartman, an ear, nose, throat doctor.

Nov. 19, 2025: Lucky me! Dr. Hartman has an 11am cancellation today. He says not to worry about the lump, and prescribes an OTC med for my tinnitus. It did not work, but I will see Dr. Hartman in Spring to hopefully delete my tinnitus.

Thanksgiving Day is Beautiful! We join Ellen and Francisco at her house and meet Francisco's two sons, Ian, who lives nearby, his girlfriend, and Antonio who flew here from Barcelona for Thanksgiving!

A winter storm arrives today. It is snowy... 5" worth! Below is the view of our front yard pond through our bedroom window.



Brian thinks snow has melted at least an inch.



The little flying birds shown in the snow, are actually stickers I placed on the outside of our windows to keep birds from flying into our windows. They are safe and very helpful!

Dec. 22, 2025: We are pretty well settled into our San Miguel rental. The sun is shining and it is 69 degrees outside. The washer works perfectly.

A gentleman comes to fix the shower in the guest bath and replaces the shower head in the master bath. Good!

*Come, ride with us to San Miguel*

Brian surprises me with a round about way to get to San Miguel. It includes side trips to museums and fabulous attractions.

*THANK YOU, Brian, for my 81st Birthday Trip! ;-))*

Dec. 14, 2025, Sunday: Sadly, actor and director Rob Reiner and his wife are found dead. Their son Nick is implicated as the murderer.

Dec. 16, 8am: Traffic is crazy on Clarkson Road by Marquette High School. Decades ago I called on band and choir directors at schools to help them raise money for trips.

Brian stops at Kaldi's where he gets a hot coffee latte and I get a hot matcha tea! Delish!

We head out Manchester and old highway 100 toward Purina Farms and I-44.

8:34am: I mail 3 checks at the Labadie post office and my 2025 sales tax form and check. Photo below is in Labadie, MO.



9:24am: A billboard reads...

“Stop for Beer. Families and Dogs are welcome.” 😊

11:22am, 50 cloudy degrees: Regular gas is just \$2.28 a gallon near Springfield, MO.

Tulsa, OK: Oops! The Philbrook Museum of Art in Tulsa, OK, is closed today. I hope we can see it on our way home.



2:33pm: We cross the Arkansas River and overnight in Stillwater, Oklahoma. Brian visits Bad Brads and gets a half slab of barbecued pork and coleslaw, a tasty, in-room dinner.

Dec. 17: Brian surprises me with a pair of diamond stud earrings for my 81st birthday! Big hugs, kisses and lots of love...



Where will I wear them???



We head toward Lubbock, Texas from Stillwater, OK through lots of fog on mostly two lane roads.

10:10am: Wind mills abound in Canton, OK.

11:36am: We are in Texas!

12:45pm, 67 degrees! Pampa, TX. Gas is \$2.19 a gallon for regular.



1:02pm: We pass a truck with huge bales of cotton. Cotton is along the highway. The little green dots in the field are huge bales of cotton.

2:15pm:  
A Roadrunner  
greets us.



PALO DURO CANYON  
STATE PARK

HAS BEEN DESIGNATED A

REGISTERED  
NATURAL LANDMARK

THIS SITE POSSESSES EXCEPTIONAL VALUE  
AS AN ILLUSTRATION OF THE NATION'S NATURAL  
HERITAGE AND CONTRIBUTES TO A BETTER  
UNDERSTANDING OF MAN'S ENVIRONMENT

1976

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR



THE BATTLE OF PALO DURO CANYON

As the sun rose on September 28, 1874, Colonel Mackenzie led the US Army into Palo Duro Canyon. They worked their way down the canyon, forcing the Kiowa, Cheyenne, and Comanche to flee and leave their winter supplies behind. Mackenzie's soldiers burned the supplies in a huge bonfire and slaughtered over a thousand horses. Loss of human life was low, but the tribes could not make it through the winter without their supplies.

Palo Duro Canyon State Park, is the second largest canyon in the US! It is 500 feet deep and Beautiful!!!



3:27pm 76 sunny degrees: Happy cows graze along a gravel road. Now we head south on I-27 toward Lubbock, TX.

*“Santa’s coming. Have you been a good driver?”*

Dec. 18, 8:31am, 50 sunny degrees, Wolforth, TX:  
Gas is \$2.05 for regular!

Here in Brownfield, regular gas is \$2.49 a gallon. Pretty amazing difference.



9:32am: We figure an oil baron lives on this estate.



10:05am: We are headed to Wink, TX. Brian and his family lived in Midland TX from 1950-1956. He said he could see a flare of Wink from Midland. Oil wells are galore. This is definitely a different kind of rural than Hoffman, Illinois where my parents were raised.





11:43am, Monahans Sandhills State Park: Brian walks Coltz in the sand hills this very windy day. He says the sand hills over this hill are likely 50 feet high.





I love this little Javelina at Monahans Sandhills State Park.

### *A pet baby skunk*

Brian recalls that decades ago, near the sand hills, he and his dad went into a place to get his dad coffee. In walked a cowboy with a pet baby skunk. ;-))



12:55pm: We pass a train with around 150 cars. Two locomotives assist in the middle of all cars. Two trucks pass and interrupt my count.



1:35pm: The Davis Mountains nearly surround us. They are a beautiful and welcome change of scenery. The altitude is 5200 feet! It must be why Alpine, Texas is called Alpine. ;-))

1:52pm: We are at 6774 feet! Texas Highway 118 is a hilly, twisty mountain road with beautiful views!



*McDonald observatory - 6774 feet!*



This rotatable telescope weighs 160 tons! Now the whole dome is rotating with a rather eerie sound. This telescope was built in 1968, six years after Brian and I graduated from high school. It is the second largest telescope in the world.





This telescope can be rotated inside the dome.

Brian's parents brought him to this area several times in the early 50s when they lived in Midland, TX.



5:59pm: We settle into our room 212 at the beautiful old Holland Hotel in Alpine, Texas, which is 4497 feet above sea level. Brian walks Coltz around the block. He's been in his crate way too long today.



We walk two blocks for an excellent day-after-my-birthday dinner at the Reata restaurant. This big boy is on the wall in the restaurant. My tuna and broccoli dinner is delicious!

Dec.19, 8:37am, sunny 57 degrees: Alpine, Texas is a neat little town. Beautiful brickwork is in the center of downtown streets where they cross. Great looking little shops are abundant.



Dec. 19, 2025, 9:16am: This gorgeous lobby is in the Gage Hotel in Marathon, Texas. Built in 1927, it is in the National Register of Historic Places.

In Sanderson, Texas, Brian finds an amazing hardware store! I didn't catch the name of it, but, oh my! It has enough inventory along the narrow isles of three floors to keep one occupied for at least a week!



*Fun!!!*

10:27 am:  
Sanderson,  
TX: Brian  
shows me the  
a m a z i n g  
h a r d w a r e  
store.

Narrow isles  
go on and on  
forever. We  
run across a  
gentleman  
a d d i n g  
inventor y  
who says his  
wife owns the  
store.



10:29am: Brian is in front of the dinosaur at the corner of the fabulous hardware store.

Brian spots a blimp over the highway. Next we see a small fenced field with many, many goats.

Altitude now is 2100 feet.

Neither the online Marriott number nor the number Brian got works. We'll just have to check in when we get to Saltillo.

Many box cars are simply parked on tracks to our left. No engine.

Texas Highway 90 is nice and smooth.

Brian sends population info:

Jeff Davis County, TX - As of the 2020 census, 1,178 people, 896 households, and 632 families were living in the county.

Ft Davis, TX – Population 1024

Valentine, TX – Population 73

McDonald Observatory - 64

Try as I did, I am not sure I made a reservation at the Four Points by Sheraton on Sautillo, Mexico. The phone number we have for the hotel does not work,



1:54pm, 74 degrees: We cross the border at Eagle Pass, TX, to Piedras Negras, Mexico. Brian gets pesos, but where do we get our passports stamped?

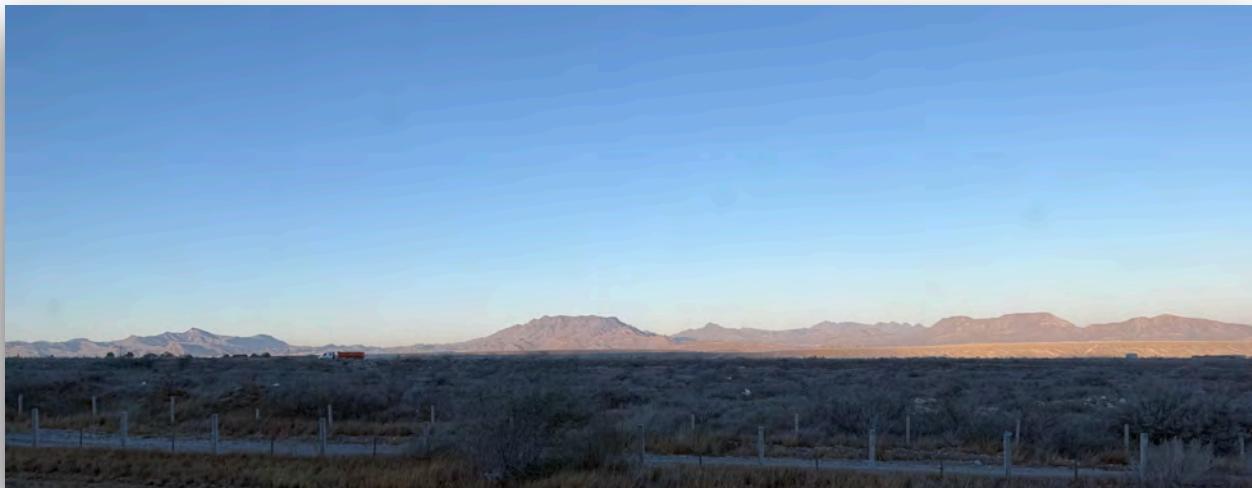


3:52pm, 76 degrees: The Mexican landscape is similar to what we saw in west Texas, complete with mountains in the background. There are more cactus, however, and many power lines.

Most roads are good, but when they aren't they are not good!

4:55pm, 76 degrees: 104 miles to Saltillo.

In Mexico, a two lane highway with shoulders is often used as a three lane road with the middle being the passing lane.



Dec. 19, 5:15pm: Beautiful mountains to our left.



Dec. 20, 7:26am, 58 degrees: A gentleman fills our gas and cleans our windshield. It reminds me of my childhood. This dog rests outside the station.

7:50am: Caseta de Cobra, a busy toll station on our way to San Miguel. Charge: \$2.83.

*A Beautiful Day...*

8:06am, 42 degrees: 7100 feet.

9:05am, 47 degrees: 6100 feet. Brian sees a Bear Crossing sign on this 4 lane highway with a median. There are many bull crossing signs.



*A Pretty Fence...*



9:40am, 53 degrees: We pass a horse grazing in the sunny median.

10:10am: Real clouds! Not just fog. Briefly. Three minutes later, clear skies again. ;-))

Mexico's way to slow traffic is to put rows of tiny metal bumps across the highway. Around ten rows, spaced I'm guessing, maybe 20 feet apart, remind drivers to slow down.

10:36am, 63 sunny degrees: Brian chooses the toll road. This Caseta de Cobra is not very busy.

11:02am: A man tends a flock of grazing goats in the median.



11:30am: Lots of cactus are for sale in many stands along the highway.

12:27pm: One hundred more miles to San Miguel. ;-))

I love this large red maple leaf on the back and the sides of a big white truck. See the profile of a face in the center? I love it and found this image on a website for Gonzales Trucking!

1:12pm: It is 77 degrees here and 55 degrees at home.

We pass huge greenhouses and an outdoor slightly covered cow area with lots of cows. Next we pass white covers suspended by polls. Greens are growing underneath.

Finally, a sign saying San Miguel is just 20 miles. We are on a new four lane road with flowers in the center



2:20pm: Finally, we see a recognizable street and, we get to our rental apartment in Puente Verde, above. Indeed it is a gated community and it is quiet!!!

5:24pm: Whew! After naps we are reasonably unpacked and somewhat organized. I'm so glad Brian brought an extension cord for there are hardly any outlets in this place. Now I need to find my iPhone charger cord and plug for the wall.



Our first night we eat at our first night restaurant, “El Pegaso” Brian and I each order his favorite, Eggs Benedict. Delicious!

*The Jardín is packed tonight.*



7:11pm: The Christmas Tree and church in the Jardin.

7:37pm: We arrive home from our favorite first night in San Miguel restaurant, El Pegaso. It is a good downhill walk.



Dec. 21, 2025, 10:19am: This is the first street to our right as we walk toward the Jardin. I love the Christmas ribbons and the fact that LaConnexion, our mail service, is so close.



Dec. 22, 2025, 5:45pm: I smile at this sign, and the pizza is delicious at this little place in Fabrica Aurora. It is an easy, long level block to walk there...



*Rest in Peace, Cousin Janice.*

Dec. 23, 2025: My 87 year old cousin Janice Boeker Nierman passed at 2:23am at High Point Senior Living Center in Centralia, IL. Her funeral will be Monday, Dec. 29 in Hoyleton, IL. She is in a much better place.



**Joy Kroeger Beckner**

20h ·

...



**National Geographic... · Follow**

Dana Cristina · 23h ·

**Just say "hi"! So we know you  
are still active in this group.**



I just love this photo on Facebook. Enjoy!



Dec. 24, 2025, 4:35pm: A Santa Mohiganga greets everyone in the Jardin. His partner is to the left. Mohigangas are very tall paper mache puppets worn by brave persons who are about half as tall as the entire puppet.





Here you can see just how tall mohigangas really are.



Brian & Coltz in the Parroquia de San Miguel Archangel  
aka The Jardin. (Pronounced Har-deen)



Dec. 25, 2025, 9:39am: Brian surprises me with a sweet box of chocolates from Johfrej, our favorite chocolate shop. We agreed to not give gifts this Christmas, but this is more than welcome! ;-))

We have a simple Christmas dinner of a breakfast fruit bowl with yogurt, almonds and granola, Brian's with orange juice and mine with tart cherry juice.



Dec. 26, 2025, 6:03pm: We arrive in the Jardin and then walk to a favorite restaurant, "Berlin." My beet appetizer, salmon dinner, Brian's Jagerschnitzel and one shared martini were only \$76. Back home, they would have been much more, plus we have enough for another meal, too!



Dec. 27, 2025, 4:12pm: A message arrives from my cousin Mary Ann Monken Long that her younger sister Jane, above, passed away around 3:30 today. Jane smoked all her life and had huge breathing problems, including emphysema for three years. She was in hospice for just 7 days and was only 76 years old when she passed. Her funeral will be in early January.

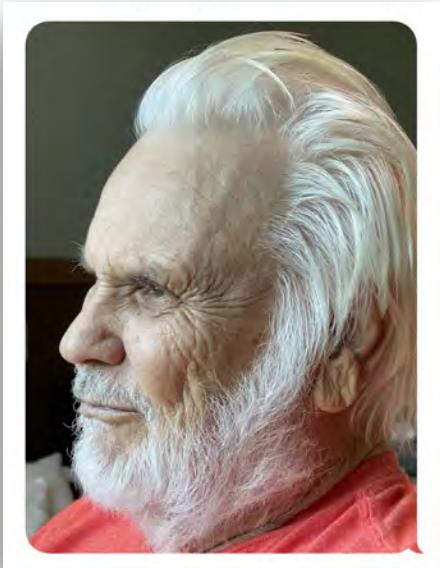
Interestingly, Mary Ann said she took care of Janice's husband Bob before he died in a nursing home about 12 years ago. Mary Ann worked in many different businesses before she retired and started caring for older persons.



My cousin Mary Ann Monken Long, daughter of my dad's sister Leona, as seen on Facebook today. Great photo!  
She has the signature Kroeger white hair!  
Mary Ann looks very peaceful...

## *More Kroeger white hair!*

I call my cousin Herm Kroeger, son of my dad's sister Frieda. He is 89 and sounds quite well! Funny as ever.



Deborah Crowder, Janice's daughter, sends this 1961 picture of the Boeker girl cousins.

I am on the left, Opal, who died of cancer in the last couple of years, Edna, Hazel and Nancy. Happy memories.

I call Hazel today and learn she has Covid. Be well, my cousin.

Manuel, the gardener, climbs a tall ladder with a 5 gallon bottle of water and waters flowers in the flower boxes. He is polite and **STRONG** to carry that water up the ladder! Yay!

Dec. 28, 2025,  
2:17pm: The indoor temperature is around 68. Temperature here is looking up! As usual, there is no central heat. We open the curtains to let the sun warm the Saltillo tile floors.





*Happy Birthday Shirley!!!*

Dec. 30, 2025: Shirley and I go back to before Kindergarten. We grew up on Monroe street, went to Washington grade school and Normandy high school. We had a good group of kids on our street: Shirley, Vicki, Stuart, Colie, Ginny, Mickey, Anita and Ray. Sledding down Monroe was always fun!



Dec. 31, 2025  
*Happy Birthday, Daddy!*

You would be 122 years old today.  
This picture was taken when he was forty, before I was born.

*Yay! my favorite Pilates teacher has an opening!*

10am: Sue Lawrence's pilates class is excellent as always. Happily she has a duet available. It was great to meet Nancy, my partner, and to see Sue again. I've been taking Sue's classes since 2005. Her mat classes teach us how to use various muscles efficiently. Excellent!!! Nancy and I are on for Thursday, Jan. 8, at 2:30pm! YAY!





Rear left: William, Ida, Sophie Broeker (Half sister), Anna, and my mom, Dina.  
Front left: Henry, Grandpa & Grandma Boeker, and Charles.

My best guess is that this photo was taken in about 1912.

4:28pm: Janice's daughter, Deborah Crowder, is still going through her mom's photos. It's nice to see this photo of my maternal grandparents, Charles and Anna Krueger Boeker.

Prior to being married to Charles Boeker Sr., Anna was married to a man named Broeker and had a daughter Sophia. No photo of Mr. Broeker is available. In the above picture, the two boys on the left might be Henry in the back row and William in the front row. Bill's son, my cousin Floyd, can you help? Thank you!!!



*Thank you for being in my life and for  
reading all of this.*

*Happy New Year!!!*

*Stay well.*

*Hugs,*

*Joy*

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